

DEVELOPMENT OF THE INDIVIDUAL

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be a child's ceremony, for it is the acting out of a mythical incident that has great appeal to the children. The children explained the game, or ceremony, to me as follows. Some children were left orphaned by the death of their father and they lived alone with their mother, who had very little food to give them. When they asked their mother for food one day and she replied that she had nothing for them they ran out of the house. Immediately a great hole formed in the center of the house. The children sat outside on the branch of a tree and sang *limm limm limm*. The next morning the children returned to the house and again asked for food. Now the mother gave them some stale cassava crumbs. They ate and returned to their tree branch. Now they began to grow feathers, and after four days they had become *tainturu* birds. They returned to the house and lived in the newly formed hole while the eldest brother flew off each day to fetch food for them. It is he who is captured by the *abúhuwa* but manages to escape so that he can return and look after his younger brothers and sisters. The *abúhuwa* customarily attack and seize children who are neglected or have been abandoned by their parents. They are dangerous, but they are also slow-witted and so can be eluded. Adults, it should be said, pay no attention to this or any other kind of children's game.

There is another game in which a little girl constructs a bower of palm leaves around herself and waits to be flushed out by a boy hunter. As for toys, the boys spin tops of fruits, they make cat's cradles, they walk on stilts, and they make a plaited snake that catches a finger and tightens when stretched. Among the *Helénewa* Koch-Grunberg observed a ball game played with corn-husk balls (1909, II, 226 ff.). This game, played by older men, I did not observe among the *Bahukwa*.

PUBERTY

The Cubeo do not recognize an abrupt transition from childhood to adulthood in the case of boys. Male maturity is an individual matter to them, although past the age of 15 a boy will almost surely be drawn out of the pack into the adult world. Boys, however, are subject to growth magic from the time they enter the play pack until they leave it. An account of these rites is reserved for a later chapter. The ordeal of the stinging ants, a feature of puberty rites elsewhere in the region, occurs among the Cubeo during one of these rites.

Girls undergo digital defloration at the age of eight, I was told. An old man of the sib who is no longer virile is charged with this

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task. He is said to stretch the young girl's vagina until he can insert three fingers. He then announces, "You are a woman." The Cubeo say that if a girl should reach her first menstruation with her hymen intact coitus will ever after be painful for her and she will have difficulties during parturition. Digital defloration is a secret act; officially, the Cubeo credit the moon with the act. The moon copulates at night with a young girl and brings on her first menstruation. Thus, a prepubescent girl is referred to as *painwe hebiko* (one who has not yet copulated with the moon).

The pubescent girl (*pipimi*: one who is blown)² is said to be secluded for ten days behind screens at the rear of the house, taking nothing but cawava and water. She leaves the house to excrete, through a secret doorway in the side wall of the maloca so that she will not be seen by a man. She uses a scratching stick on her head or else her hair will turn white. Some said her hair would fall out. To develop a tender facial complexion she washes with a leaf that creates a lather and she covers her face with rubber latex and painfully pulls it off. She also pushes dried peppers up her nostrils until her skin burns red with irritation. The pain of this facial treatment is a parallel to the ordeal of the ants and the whipping, endured by the boys, but the justification is different. A mother says to her daughter, "You have been accustomed to disobey me. Now let me see how much pain you can stand."

At the end of the ten days her mother paints her body with genipa and she goes to the river to bathe. In the evening a drinking party is held in the girl's honor and her mother pushes her forward to take part in the dances. The period of seclusion is an affair of the women and the men behave as though nothing unusual were going on.

When a *Bahukitwa* girl came of age during my stay among them she was sent to the house of her paternal grandmother nearby for proper seclusion. I was not allowed to go near the house and I did not see the girl until she had emerged again for the drinking party. Her hair had been cut short. I may have missed many details. Father Guacone, for example, reports that among the neighboring Tucano the shaman officiated at a girl's puberty isolation. He cut her hair short, burned the cuttings in a ritual manner, and then sent the girl to dispose of the ashes in the river.

After her first menstruation a girl is eligible for marriage but the change in her life is otherwise minor. She wears love charms and takes more care of her personal appearance. She is still attached to her mother's household.

² She is also known as *nominyatu* (becoming a woman).

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provided. Men pass cigarettes to one another after a puff or two. A man will ordinarily pass a cigarette to his own wife only, for the giving of a cigarette to a woman has a potentially erotic significance. When a woman receives the cigarette she passes it among her children until finally the suckling baby has had a smoke. She then returns it to her husband. The custom of sharing the cigarette has been widely observed along the Vaupes and its tributaries. The Indians accept it as a mark of friendship and of trust. Ceremonious smoking of cigars held in hooked holders accompanies the dignified conversations of the sib elders and is mandatory when these old men get together to chant the sib origin traditions. Several cigars are lighted and are passed around. There is no way of sharing coca, but *milit*, as we have noted, is "danced in" by the sons of the hosts, and the little ornamented beaker in which it is kept is passed around.

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Dancing begins when the assembly is warmed up with drink. At an *unkondie*, dancing, being secular, is for the young, the adolescents and unmarried and the younger married men and women. In the most common dance three or four young men line up abreast, left arm across a companion's shoulder, with the long dance flageolet that sounds the song of the butterfly, in the right hand. An orchestra of Panpipes, seated to one side, sets the rhythm to which the dancers move and sound the flageolets. Starting at the rear of the house they move down the long dance corridor to a beat that starts as one slow step, a pause, two shorter steps, a pause, and then three rapid, almost running, steps, the inevitable Cubeo procedure of placing all ritual in the metric structure of *adagio* to *presto*. They reach the front of the house, their bodies swaying forward and back as they come down the corridor and gracefully swinging from side to side as they prepare to pivot, swinging the flageolets up and around in unison. The first dancers are usually of the host sib and are brothers. During the early stages of the dance, as each of the visiting sibs joins its dancers on the floor, the formation is of brothers. It is not until much later during the night that drink and excitement have dissolved the fraternal bonds and allowed for the indiscriminate formation of dance teams. As the dancers move down the corridor the unmarried girls begin to stir: they giggle, nudge one another, sway forward with the desire to get up and join. But they are shy. They seek encouragement from one another. Often an older woman, a girl's mother, whispers sharply, "Go on, dance." Then two or three girls get up from the side lines and run behind the dancers, pacing themselves so as to slip under the yokes of the men's arms in the precise beat.

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the women and dives clumsily after it, rolling among the women and over them. He recovers it and tries to crack it in his mouth, but of course he is wearing a mask, and finally he examines it with a marvelously executed air of puzzlement and dejection. The women have been so dazed by now that the comic virtuosity of this "clown" does not draw the expected laughs. The *Ahuhuk* leaves and there is a respite. The women stir about and look after their children, and it seems as though the emotional gradient, having been broken in its upward ascent, has dropped to the most ordinary level.

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But this quiet interlude is short. At midmorning all the masked dancers storm noisily among the women in a dance called the *huanan* (wild peccary). They throw themselves upon the women, forcing them to the ground and to the copulatory position. Three or four men cover a woman. The dancers rise again to dance in sheer frenzy, careening about the room, shrieking and falling again upon another woman. But even though their excitement seems more feverish than ever, the men still do not lay a hand upon a woman. They choose for their attentions only the older women. The older women, among the Cubeo are licentious, and they behave at this time as though they have become sexually aroused. They laugh and shriek and reach for a man's thighs. The daughters observe this spectacle of their mother's sexual excitement with evident dismay and great interest. The mothers shrilly command their daughters to run away and so escape sexual molestation. At the command to run they begin to leave, but they come back to watch. Again, the very young

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boys who share this masculine license are carried away by sexual excitation and lustfully attack the women, the wives of their phratry mates. The women "fight them off" with the standard courting resistance and succeed in inflaming them all the more. Not all the masked dancers join this revelry in the same spirit. Some men, the older ones in particular, are restrained, treating the dance symbolically, and some are simply shy and only brush lightly against the women. The point of view is that of symbolic frenzy rather than of sheer irresistible. The mastery of this mood is surely a difficult one, because the women, who are a laity, are under no compulsion to discipline their feelings. This is presumably the Cubeo ceremonial conception - putting masculine-symbolically controlled behavior against the spontaneous emotionality of the women. This interplay between emotional form and substance, so to speak, adds spontaneity and emotional spice to the ceremony but always within the framework of form. That the youngsters should succumb to simple lust in this licentious dance is, to be sure, a spontaneous consequence of the